creator/writer
DAVID MICHELINIE

guest artist
JOHN RIDGWAY

EPIC COMICS

editor
ARCHIE GOODWIN

associate editor
MARGARET CLARK

colorist
PETRA SCOTESE

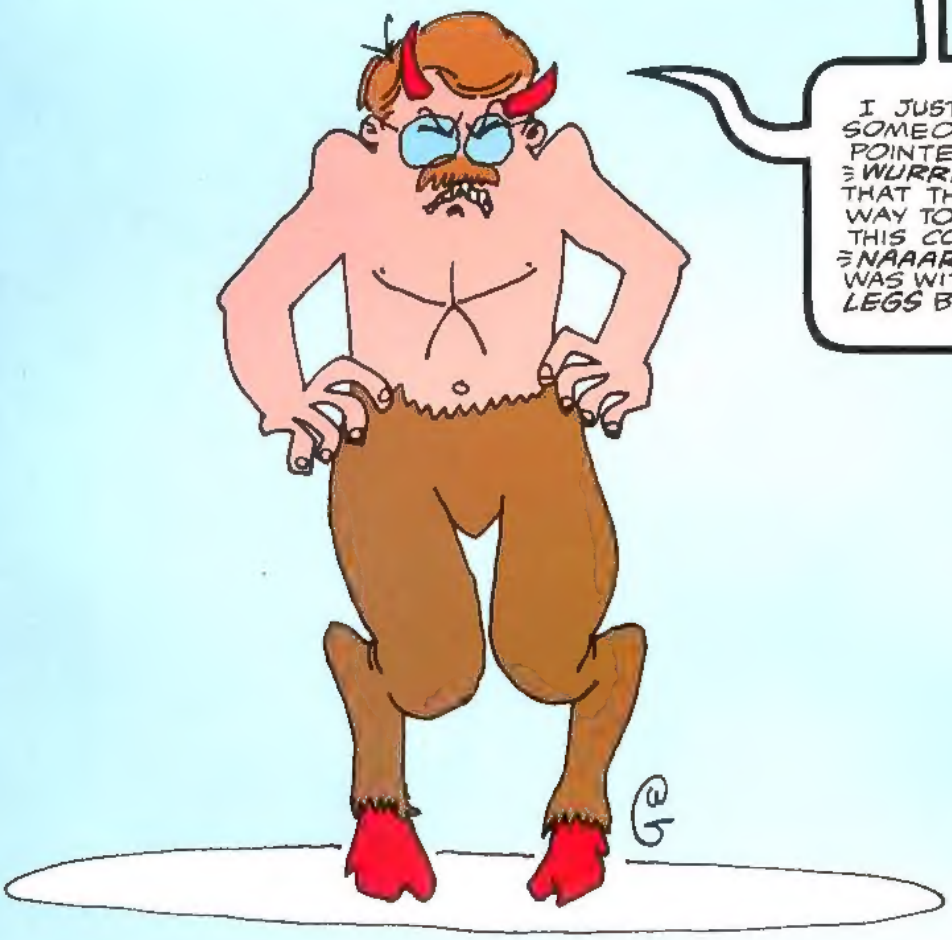
letterer
PHIL FELIX

assistant editor
DANIEL CHICHESTER

consulting editor
JIM SHOOTER

≡***EEEEIIIGH!***≡ I'M ***ARCHIE GOODWIN***, EDITOR OF MARVEL'S ***EPIC COMICS*** LINE... ≡***YAAAUGH!***≡ I WANT TO KEEP THIS ISSUE'S EDITORIAL ***BRIEF***... JUST TAKING LONG ENOUGH ≡***AIIEEFF!***≡ TO BRING TO YOUR ATTENTION AN ***ART CHANGE***...! ≡***AGHHHH!***≡ SO THAT OUR REGULAR ARTIST ***BRET BLEVINS*** WOULD HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO CATCH UP ON HIS DEADLINES WHILE STILL MAINTAINING THE USUAL ≡***WHOOAAF!***≡ HIGH LEVEL OF WORK... WE ENLISTED ANOTHER ARTISTIC DAZZLER, GREAT BRITAIN'S ***JOHN RIDGWAY***, TO FILL IN FOR THIS ISSUE...! ≡***NRRRIIIGH!***≡ I WAS SO DELIGHTED WITH WHAT JOHN DID FOR US ≡***OEEEEEK!***≡ THAT IT SEEMED THE LEAST I COULD DO TO APPEAR IN ***COSTUME*** AS ONE OF THE NIFTY VISUAL CREATIONS ≡***WOOWWWF!***≡ HE RENDERED FROM ***DAVID MICHELINIE'S*** INTRIGUING SCRIPT...!

I JUST WISH SOMEONE HAD POINTED OUT ≡***WURRRRGH!***≡ THAT THE ONLY WAY TO ***WEAR*** THIS COSTUME ≡***NAAARGGG!***≡ WAS WITH BOTH ***LEGS*** BROKEN...!



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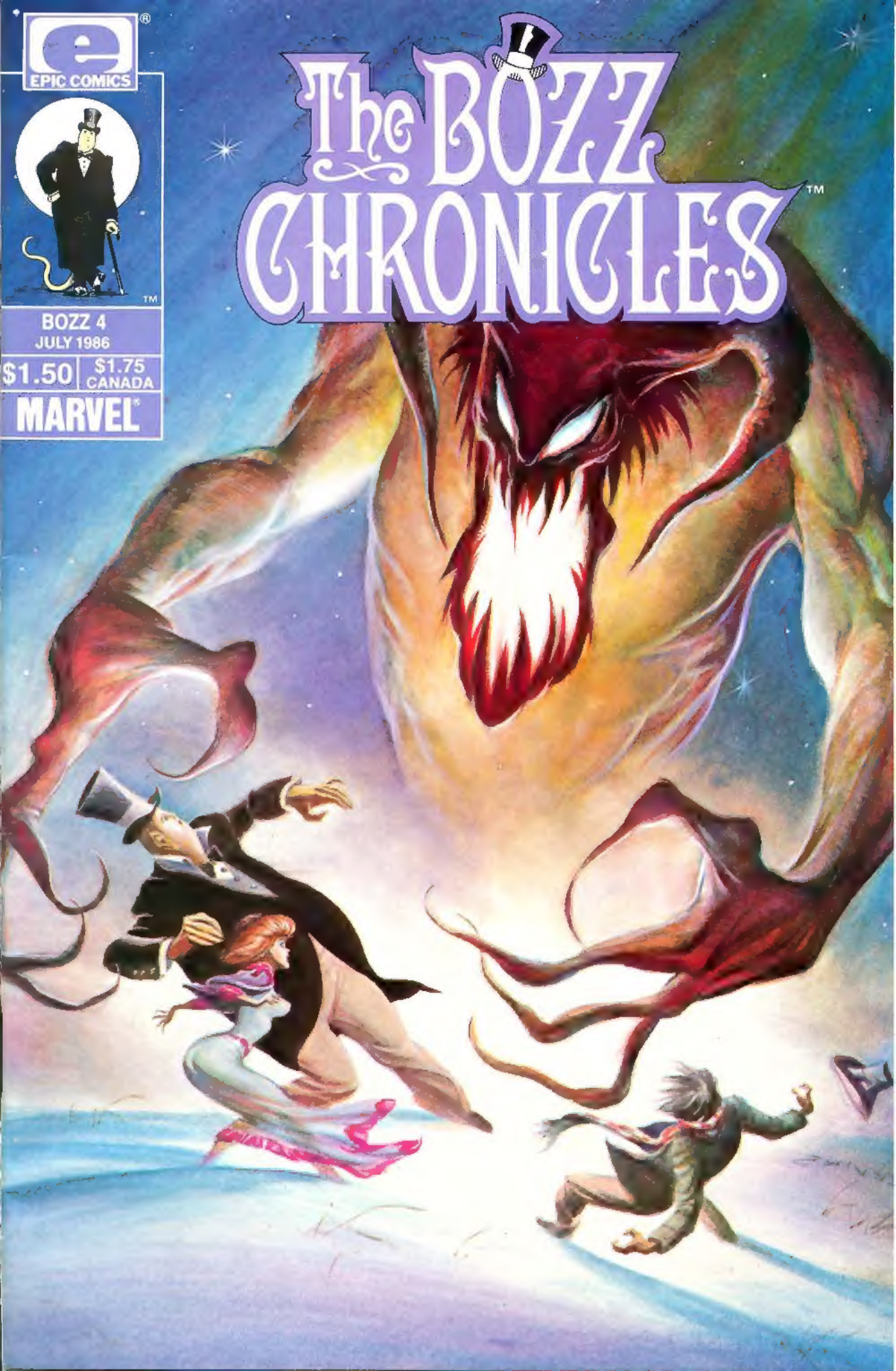
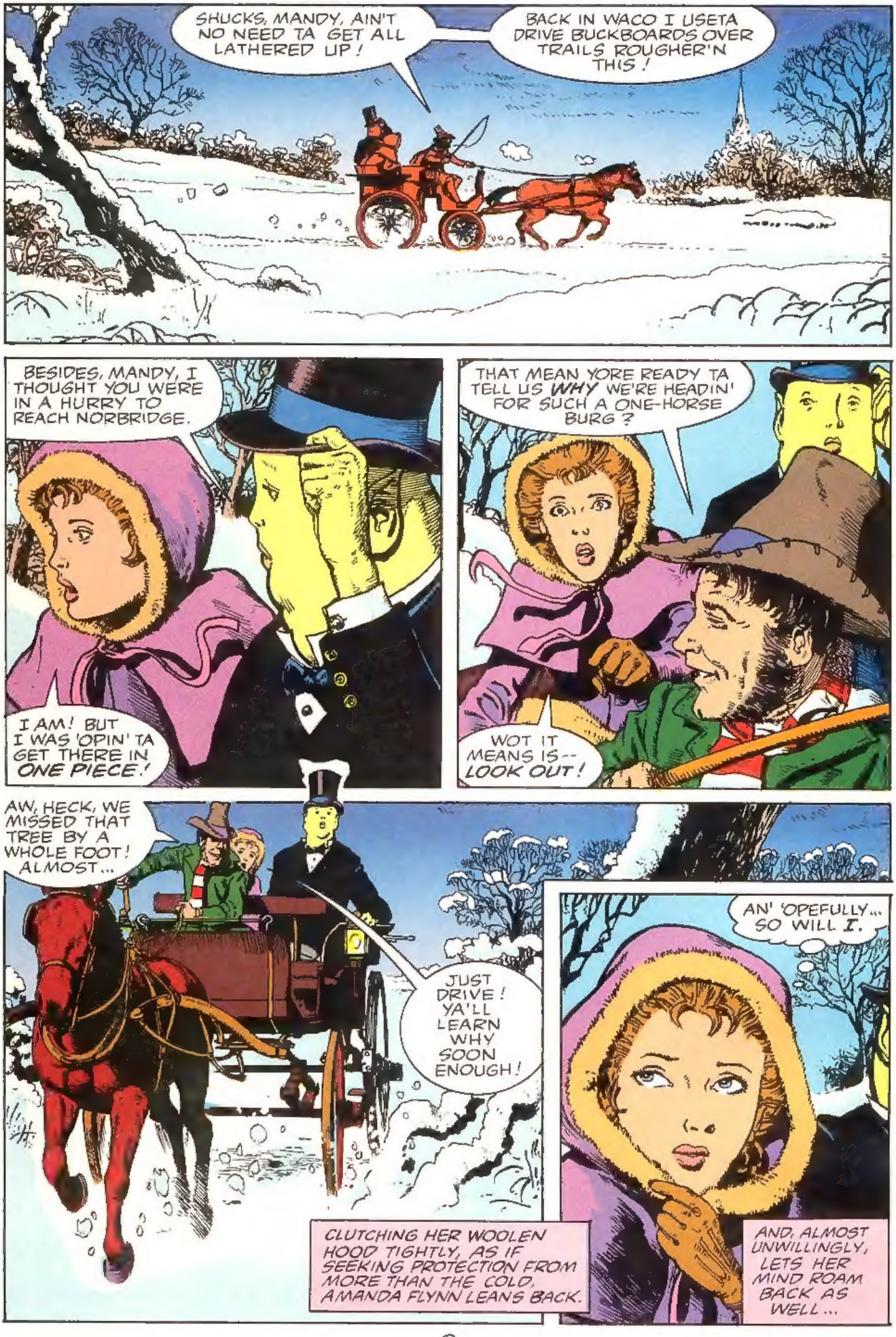
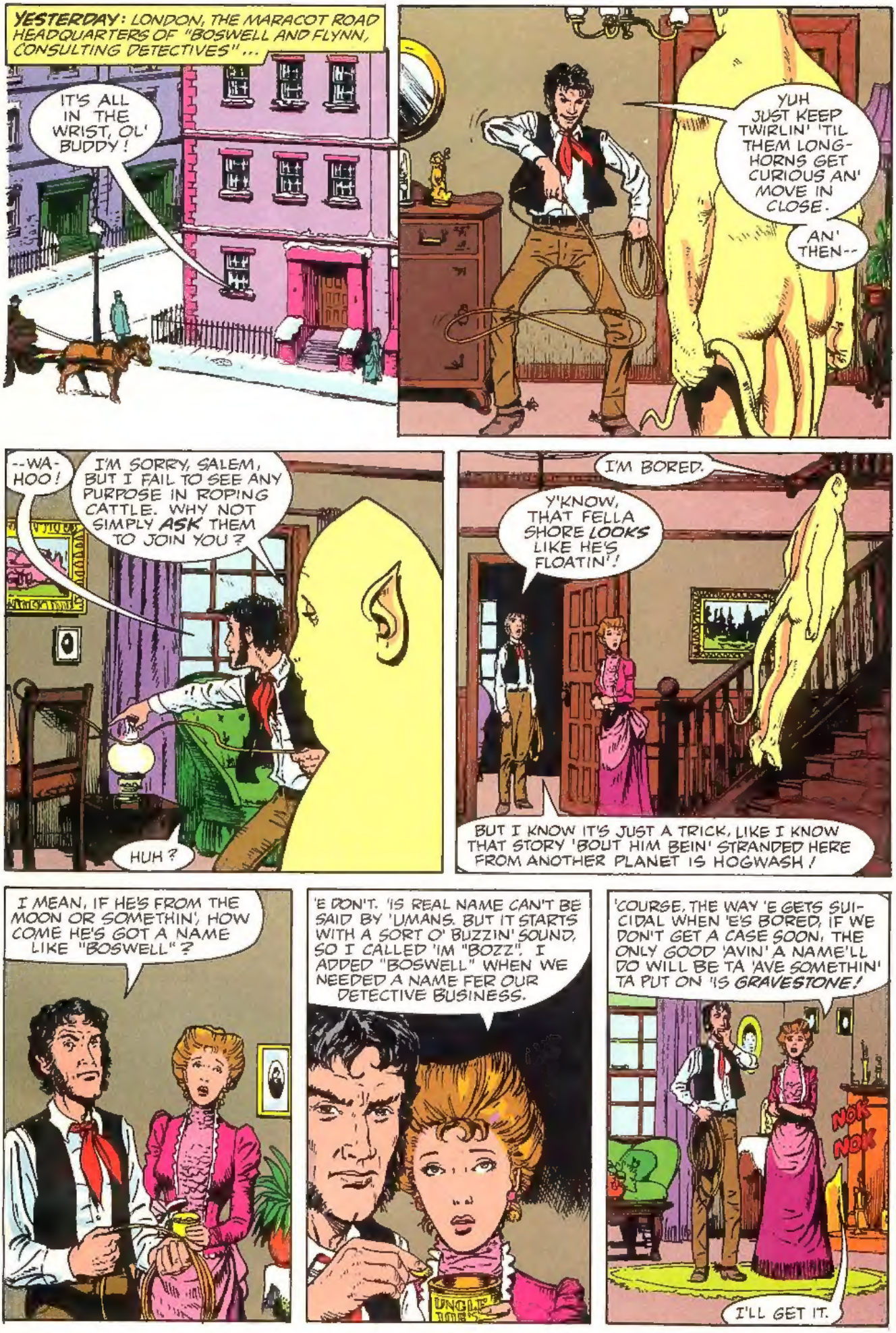

EPIC COMICS
The BOZZ CHRONICLES
BOZZ 4
JULY 1986
$1.50
$1.75 CANADA
MARVEL

SOUTHEASTERN ENGLAND, THE LATTER DECADES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY; MORE SPECIFICALLY, A COUNTRY LANE WHERE SNOW-- AND EMOTIONS -- CHURN WITH EQUAL FEROCITY...
YEEEEEHAAAAH!
THRAK
FER CHROIST'S SAKE, SALEM! YER GONNA KILL US ALL!
WERE-TOWN!


SHUCKS, MANDY, AIN'T NO NEED TA GET ALL LATHERED UP!
BACK IN WACO I USETA DRIVE BUCKBOARDS OVER TRAILS ROUGHER'N THIS!
BESIDES, MANDY, I THOUGHT YOU WERE IN A HURRY TO REACH NORBRIDGE.
I AM! BUT I WAS 'OPIN' TA GET THERE IN ONE PIECE!
THAT MEAN YORE READY TA TELL US WHY WE'RE HEADIN' FOR SUCH A ONE-HORSE BURG?
WOT IT MEANS IS-- LOOK OUT!
AW, HECK, WE MISSED THAT TREE BY A WHOLE FOOT! ALMOST...
JUST DRIVE! YA'LL LEARN WHY SOON ENOUGH!
AN' 'OPEFULLY... SO WILL I.
CLUTCHING HER WOOLEN HOOD TIGHTLY, AS IF SEEKING PROTECTION FROM MORE THAN THE COLD, AMANDA FLYNN LEANS BACK.
AND, ALMOST UNWILLINGLY, LETS HER MIND ROAM BACK AS WELL...


YESTERDAY: LONDON, THE MARACOT ROAD HEADQUARTERS OF "BOSWELL AND FLYNN, CONSULTING DETECTIVES"...
IT'S ALL IN THE WRIST, OL' BUDDY!
YUH JUST KEEP TWIRLIN' 'TIL THEM LONG-HORNS GET CURIOUS AN' MOVE IN CLOSE.
AN' THEN--
--WA-HOO!
I'M SORRY, SALEM, BUT I FAIL TO SEE ANY PURPOSE IN ROPING CATTLE. WHY NOT SIMPLY ASK THEM TO JOIN YOU?
HUH?
I'M BORED.
Y'KNOW, THAT FELLA SHORE LOOKS LIKE HE'S FLOATIN'!
BUT I KNOW IT'S JUST A TRICK, LIKE I KNOW THAT STORY 'BOUT HIM BEIN' STRANDED HERE FROM ANOTHER PLANET IS HOGWASH!
I MEAN, IF HE'S FROM THE MOON OR SOMETHIN', HOW COME HE'S GOT A NAME LIKE "BOSWELL"?
'E DON'T. 'IS REAL NAME CAN'T BE SAID BY 'UMANS. BUT IT STARTS WITH A SORT O' BUZZIN' SOUND, SO I CALLED 'IM "BOZZ". I ADDED "BOSWELL" WHEN WE NEEDED A NAME FER OUR DETECTIVE BUSINESS.
UNCLE JOE'S
'COURSE, THE WAY 'E GETS SUICIDAL WHEN 'E'S BORED, IF WE DON'T GET A CASE SOON, THE ONLY GOOD 'AVIN' A NAME'LL DO WILL BE TA 'AVE SOMETHIN' TA PUT ON 'IS GRAVESTONE!
NOK NOK
I'LL GET IT.

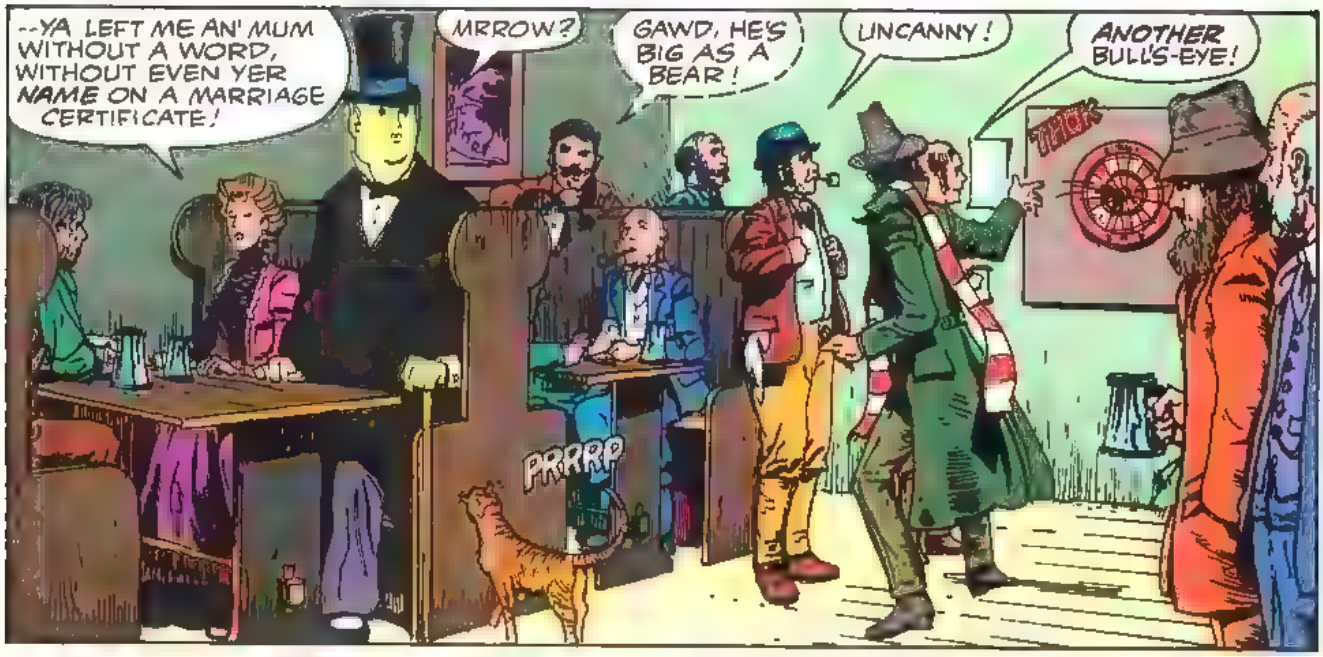
AND...
A TELE-GRAM? AW-RIGHT, 'ERE YA GO.
THANKS, M'UM.
NOW WHO'D BE SENDIN'--
--GOR! I... I-I DON'T... I-IT CAN'T...!
PACK YER BAGS, SALEM. AN' GO FETCH BOZZY. WE'RE LEAVIN' FER THE COUNTRY T'NIGHT!
TO-NIGHT? BUT I GOT PLANS TA--
DO IT!
UH, SH-SHORE THING, MANDY!
"MANDY?"
"MANDY?"
EH? W-WOT...?
WE'RE HERE!
AND SOON, AT A TRAVELLER'S INN...
I'M TIMMONS, THE PROPRIETOR. MAY I HELP YOU?

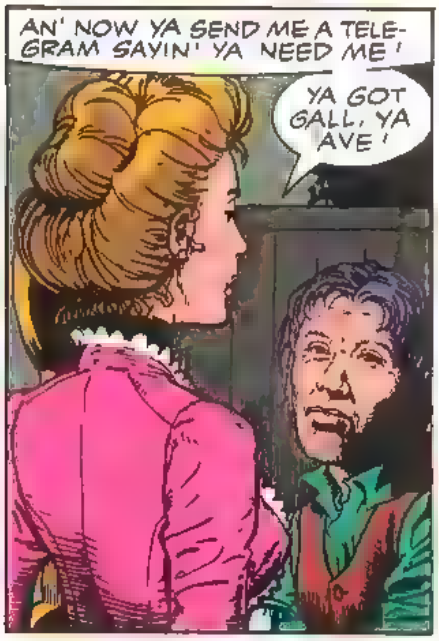
COULD BE, DUCKY. WE'RE LOOKIN' FER A PUB CALLED THE WHITE STAG.
AH, YES. IT'S REALLY QUITE EASY TO FIND. YOU GO DOWN TO--
MR. TIMMONS! H-HE'S COMIN'! THE SQUIRE IS COMIN'!
OH, DEAR! P-PARDON ME, MADAM--
--BUT I'M AFRAID THERE'S SOMETHING I MUST TEND TO RATHER QUICKLY!
LORDY! WHAT THE BLAZES IS THAT?
YES, I-I REALIZE IT'S SOMEWHAT DIS-CONCERTING, BUT--
--I'LL EXPLAIN LATER!
HOW DO YOU DO?
I'M SQUIRE BLAKBLUD.
AND YOU ARE...?
MANDY FLYNN, GUV'NOR, AT YER SERVICE.
DON'T I WISH--!

HOW CHARMING.
OH, TIMMONS. MIGHT I HAVE A WORD WITH YOU?
OF COURSE, SQUIRE.
I WAS LOOKING FOR VICAR METCALFE AT THE CHURCH, BUT HE SEEMS TO BE OUT.
AND SINCE HE FREQUENTLY PLAYS CRIBBAGE HERE IN THE EVENINGS, I THOUGHT I MIGHT LEAVE A MESSAGE FOR HIM WITH YOU.
IT WOULD BE MY HONEST PLEASURE, SIR.
EXCELLENT. JUST TELL HIM THAT THE MASTERPIECE IS ALMOST DONE, AND SHOULD BE DELIVERED IN A DAY OR TWO. GOT THAT?
WORD FOR WORD, SIR!
THANK YOU, TIMMONS.
GOOD DAY, MISS FLYNN. PERHAPS WE'LL HAVE A CHANCE TO TALK AGAIN AT SOME FUTURE TIME.
I'D LIKE THAT, YOUR LORDSHIP.
GOR, AN 'ONEST-TA-LIFE SQUIRE! I BET 'E'S GOT A MANSION 'N STABLES AN' EV'RYTHIN'!
I WONDER IF 'E'S GOT A WIFE...?

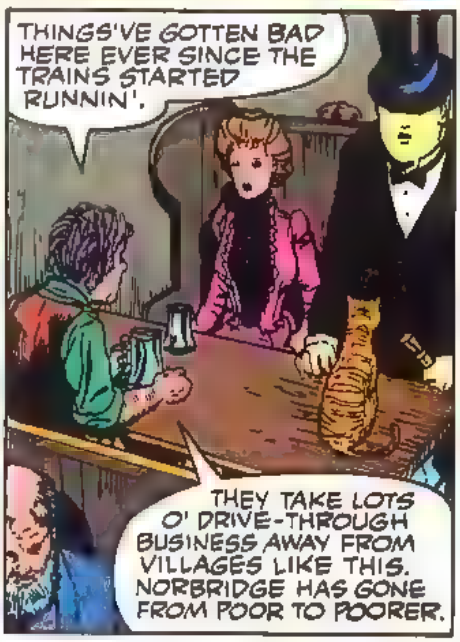
=WHEW= THAT WERE A CLOSE ONE, EH, GUV?
THAT IT WAS, BILLY.
I DO APOLOGIZE, SIRS, MADAM--
--BUT SQUIRE BLAKBLUD FANCIES HIMSELF SOMETHING OF AN ARTIST, AND HE'S BEEN GIVING HIS PAINTINGS TO THE TOWNSFOLK FOR SEVERAL MONTHS NOW.
THEY'RE RATHER GHASTLY--
--BUT THE SQUIRE'S BEEN GOOD TO US AND WE DON'T WANT TO HURT HIS FEELINGS, SO WE TRY TO DISPLAY HIS WORKS WHEN HE'S AROUND. I SUPPOSE IT'S RATHER CHILDISH, BUT WHAT HARM--
AWRIGHT, DUCKY--
--BUT WOT ABOUT THE WHITE STAG? YA GONNA GIVE US DIRECTIONS?
REALLY, MADAM, THERE'S NO NEED TO BE ABRUPT! =HRRUMPH=
IF YOU'RE IN SUCH AN ALL-FIRED HURRY, IT'S THE SIXTH BUILDING ON YOUR BLOODY RIGHT! PARDON MY FRENCH.
MERCI.

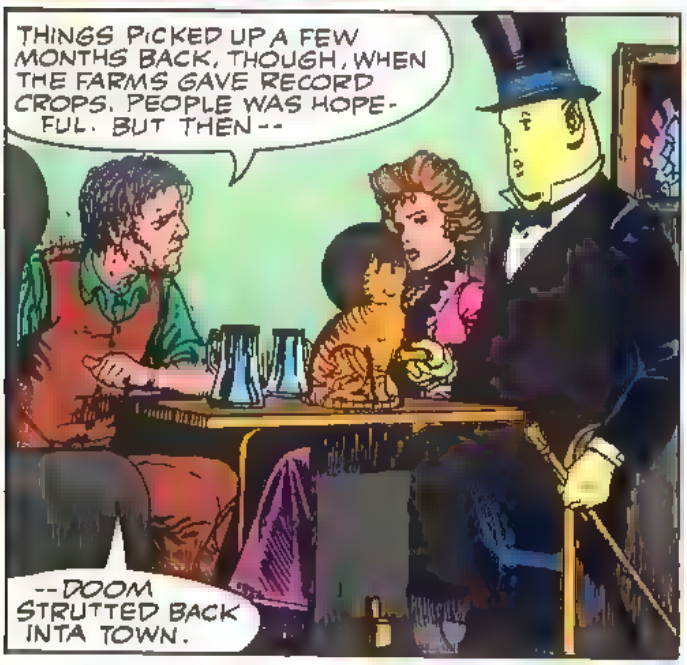
AND, MOMENTS LATER AMIDST THE SMELLS OF RICH WOOD, STALE SMOKE, AND FLOWING ALE...
HAW, HAW! THAT'S A GOOD'N, MATE!
BUT I GOTS ONE WOT'LL STRAIGHTEN OUT YER SHORT HAIRS!
"THERE ONCE WAS A LADY FROM LEEDS, WHO--"
EGAN THORPE?
--EH? YEAH, THAT'S ME. WHO WANTS TA--
--WELL, I'M A DUCK'S SISTER! HELLO, MANDY-GIRL. IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
YEAH. THAT IT 'AS...
...FATHER.
OUTSIDE, THE SNOW THAT HAS THREATENED ALL DAY BEGINS TO TUMBLE FROM SHREDDED CLOUDS. FALLING SOFTLY, LIKE FROZEN TEARS.
TWENTY YEARS, THORPE. TWENTY YEARS AGO--

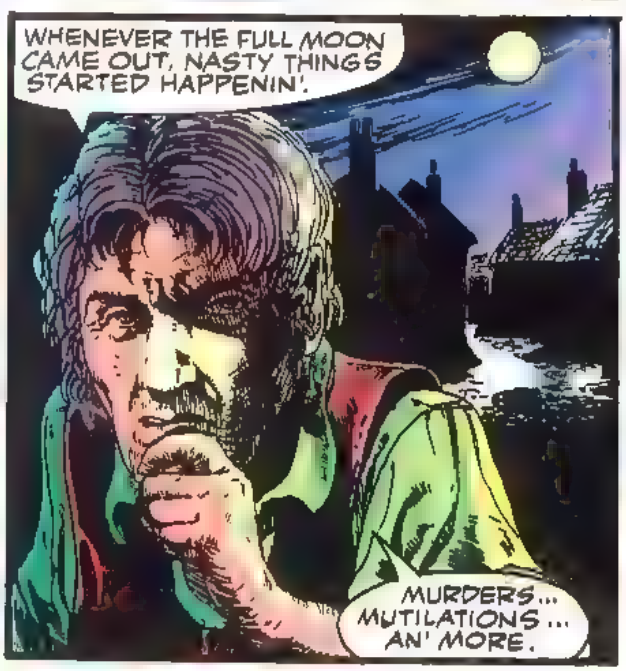

--YA LEFT ME AN' MUM WITHOUT A WORD, WITHOUT EVEN YER NAME ON A MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE!
MRROW?
GAWD, HE'S BIG AS A BEAR!
UNCANNY!
ANOTHER BULL'S-EYE!
PRRRP

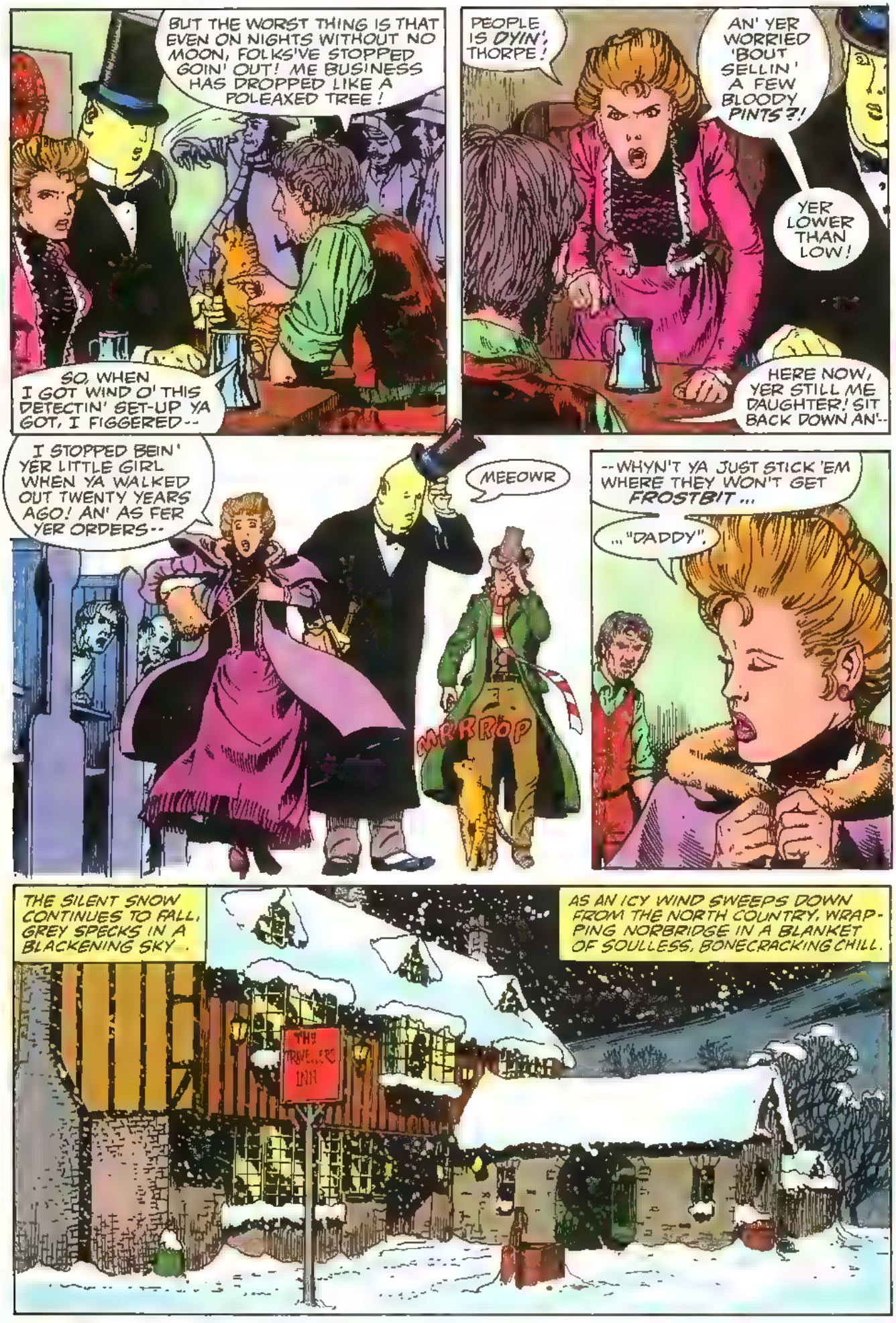

AN' NOW YA SEND ME A TELE-GRAM SAYIN' YA NEED ME!
YA GOT GALL, YA 'AVE!

NOW, MANDY-GIRL, A MAN'S GOTTA DO WOT A MAN'S GOTTA DO. BESIDES, THAT'S THE PAST.
I GOT OTHER PROBLEMS NOW.


THINGS'VE GOTTEN BAD HERE EVER SINCE THE TRAINS STARTED RUNNIN'.
THEY TAKE LOTS O' DRIVE-THROUGH BUSINESS AWAY FROM VILLAGES LIKE THIS. NORBRIDGE HAS GONE FROM POOR TO POORER.


THINGS PICKED UP A FEW MONTHS BACK, THOUGH, WHEN THE FARMS GAVE RECORD CROPS. PEOPLE WAS HOPE-FUL. BUT THEN--
--DOOM STRUTTED BACK INTA TOWN.

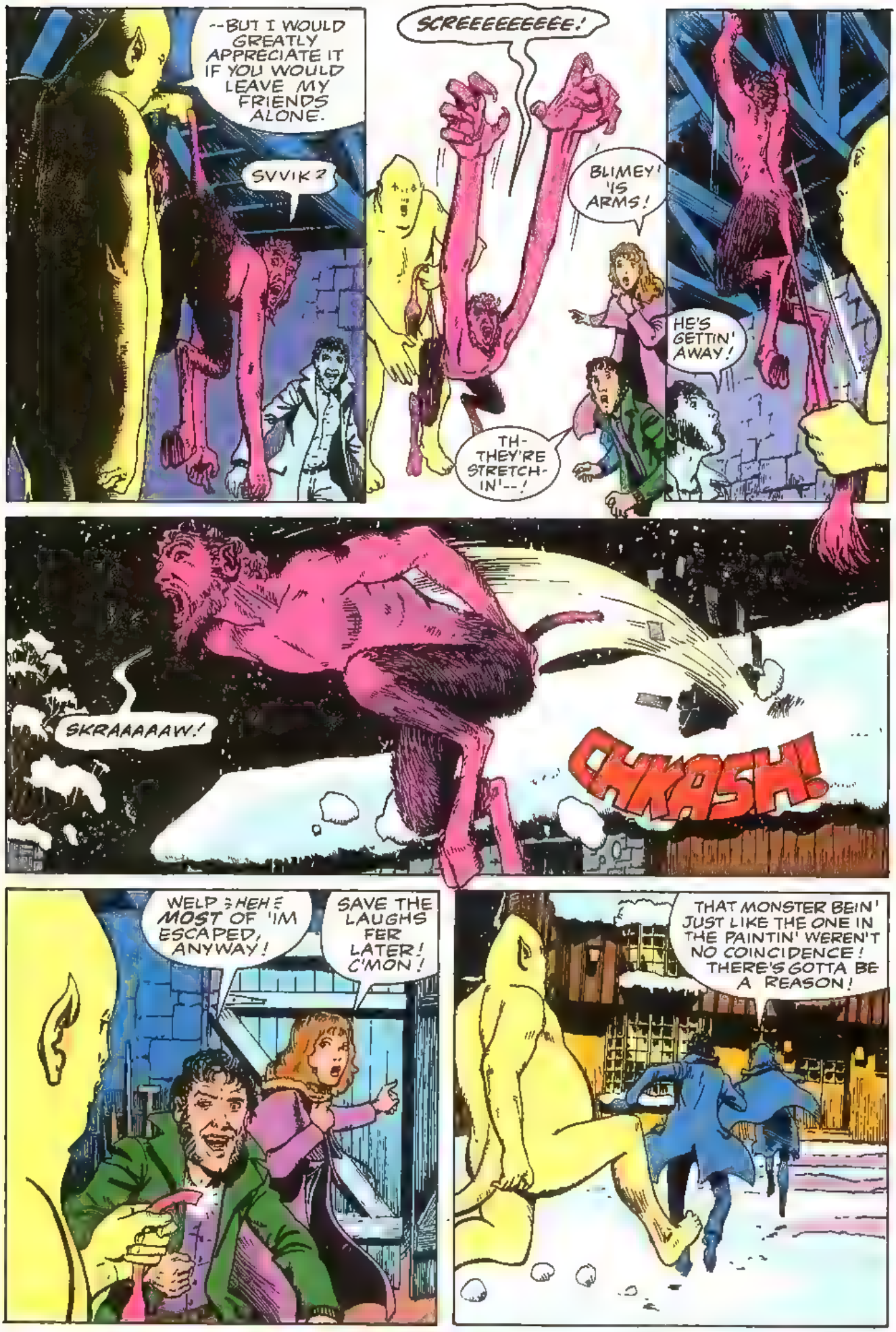

WHENEVER THE FULL MOON CAME OUT, NASTY THINGS STARTED HAPPENIN'.
MURDERS... MUTILATIONS... AN' MORE.

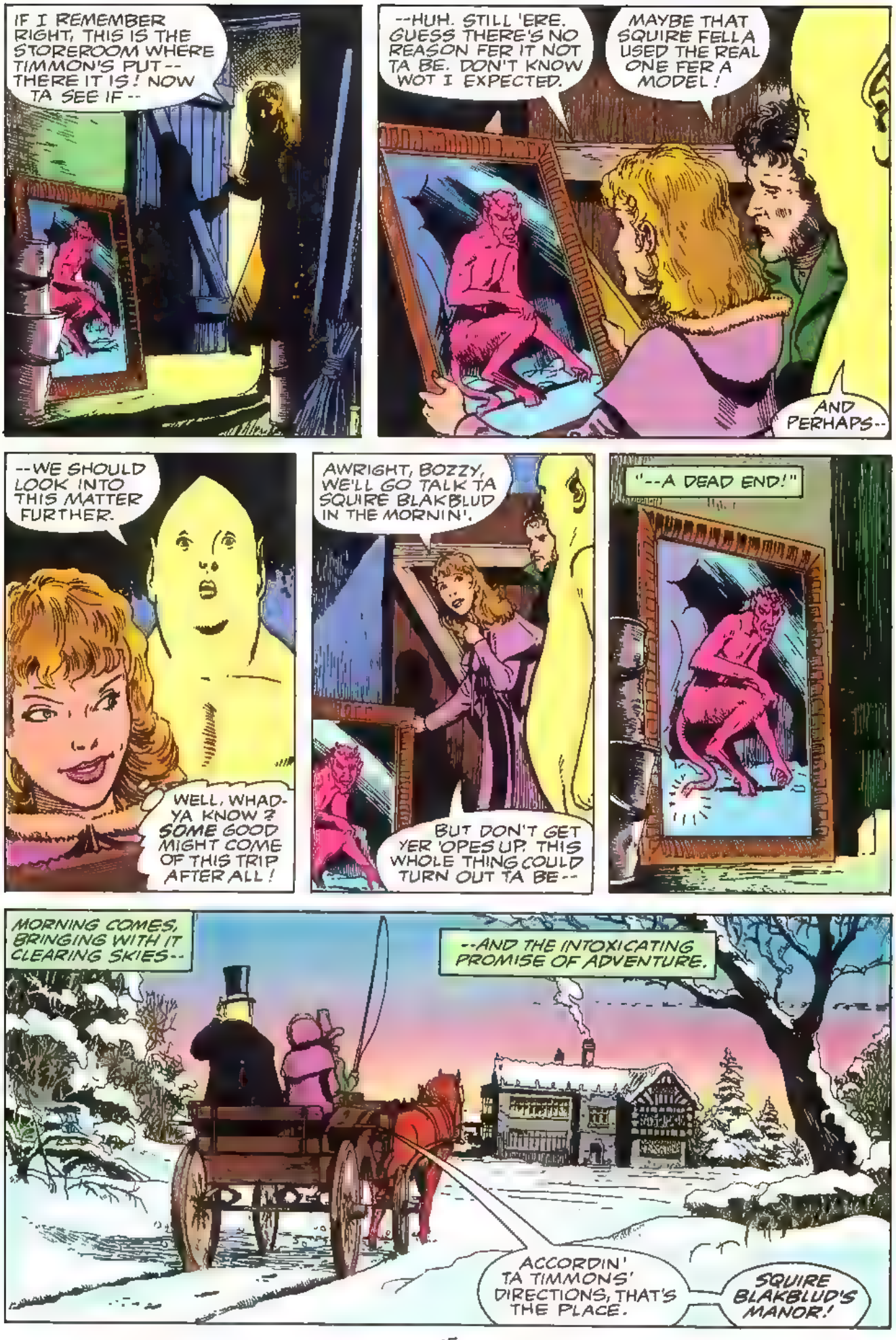

BUT THE WORST THING IS THAT EVEN ON NIGHTS WITHOUT NO MOON, FOLKS'VE STOPPED GOIN' OUT! ME BUSINESS HAS DROPPED LIKE A POLEAXED TREE!
SO, WHEN I GOT WIND O' THIS DETECTIN' SET-UP YA GOT, I FIGGERED--
PEOPLE IS DYIN', THORPE!
AN' YER WORRIED 'BOUT SELLIN' A FEW BLOODY PINTS?!
YER LOWER THAN LOW!
HERE NOW, YER STILL ME DAUGHTER! SIT BACK DOWN AN'--
I STOPPED BEIN' YER LITTLE GIRL WHEN YA WALKED OUT TWENTY YEARS AGO! AN' AS FER YER ORDERS--
MEEOWR
MRRROP
--WHYN'T YA JUST STICK 'EM WHERE THEY WON'T GET FROSTBIT...
..."DADDY".
THE SILENT SNOW CONTINUES TO FALL, GREY SPECKS IN A BLACKENING SKY...
AS AN ICY WIND SWEEPS DOWN FROM THE NORTH COUNTRY, WRAPPING NORBRIDGE IN A BLANKET OF SOULLESS, BONECRACKING CHILL.
THE TRAVELLERS INN

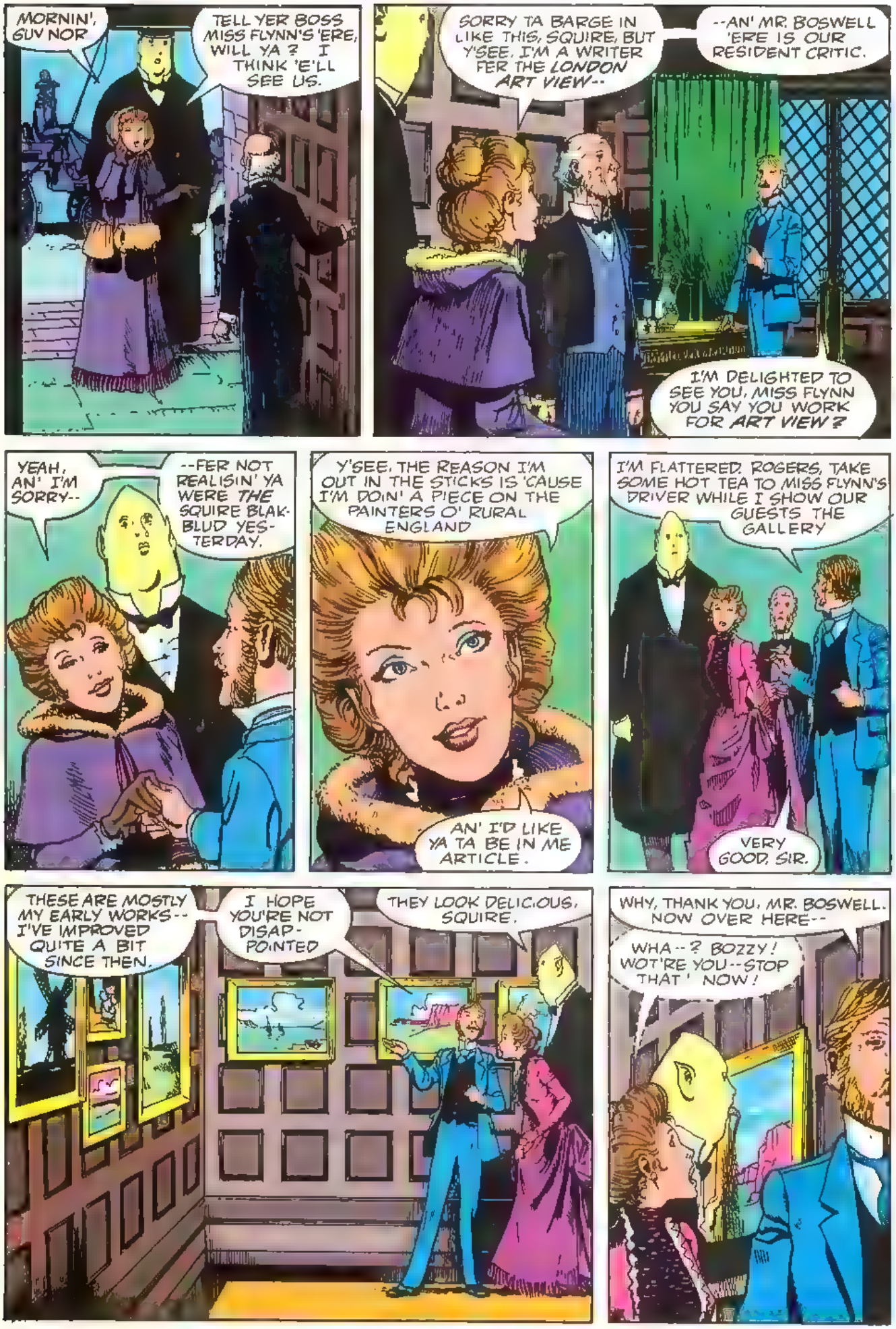
A COLD AS SAD AND BLUE AS EYES THAT STARE OUT AT THE NIGHT, SEEING LIFE AS IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN--
--FOR "AMANDA THORPE".
MANDY ?
SORRY TA BOTHER YUH, BUT, WELL, I WAS JUST WONDERIN' ...
...ARE YUH OKAY ?
THANKS, SALEM. I GUESS IT'S OBVIOUS EH ? WOT I FEEL FER ME OLD MAN ?
THE FUNNY THING IS, SOMETHIN' INSIDE ME WANTS--MAYBE EVEN NEEDS--TA LOVE THAT SLIMY OL' SOD.
GUESS THAT'S WHY I COME TA NORBRIDGE.
BUT THAT SCENE AT THE PUB. I FELT SO BLOODY CHEAP, SO OUT O' CONTROL. AN' WORSE'N THAT, I AIN'T NEVER FELT SO ...
...VULN'RABLE.
HECK, DARLIN', EVERYONE'S GOTTA BE SOFT SOMETIMES. THAT'S PART O' BEIN' HUMAN.
I...I KNOW.
I JUST 'ATE BEIN' SOFT... WHEN I DON'T WANNA BE.
THE SAD EYES BLINK, VISION BLURRING. BUT THEN...
GHEEEEYAAAAA!
LORD O' MERCY! THAT COME FROM OUTSIDE!
QUICK! ⁞SNUFFLE⁞ G-GET YER COAT!

AND...
SCREAMIN'S STOPPED! BUT WOT DIRECTION--?
THERE!
STABLE DOOR'S PART OPEN! THE BLACKSMITH MUST BE WORKIN' LATE!
BETTER MAKE THAT, "WAS" WORKIN' LATE!
HEY, YOU! GET AWAY FROM THAT--
--HOLY CROW! I-IT'S THAT UGLY CRITTER FROM THE PAINTIN'!
YEAH, BUT THIS ONE'S FER REAL!
DON'T WORRY, MANDY! I'LL TAKE CARE O' THE MURDERIN' LITTLE--
SALEM!
--AGH!
WHOK

GET BACK, YA 'EATHEN DEVIL!
G-G-GET BACK OR I'LL
HAAAAAAA!
SSSSSSS
I GOT 'IM, MANDY! HIS ARMS'RE PINNED! NOW GO FETCH THE LAW WHILE I--
GULP
KREESTAAAAVO!
SNAP-AP
W-WE SHORE STEPPED IN THE SHEEP DIP THIS TIME!
PARDON ME--


--BUT I WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE IT IF YOU WOULD LEAVE MY FRIENDS ALONE.
SVVIK?
SCREEEEEEEEE!
BLIMEY! 'IS ARMS!
HE'S GETTIN' AWAY!
TH-THEY'RE STRETCH-IN'--!
SKRAAAAAW!
CHKASH!
WELP, HEH E MOST OF 'IM ESCAPED, ANYWAY!
SAVE THE LAUGHS FER LATER! C'MON!
THAT MONSTER BEIN' JUST LIKE THE ONE IN THE PAINTIN' WEREN'T NO COINCIDENCE! THERE'S GOTTA BE A REASON!


IF I REMEMBER RIGHT, THIS IS THE STOREROOM WHERE TIMMON'S PUT -- THERE IT IS! NOW TA SEE IF --
--HUH. STILL 'ERE. GUESS THERE'S NO REASON FER IT NOT TA BE. DON'T KNOW WOT I EXPECTED.
MAYBE THAT SQUIRE FELLA USED THE REAL ONE FER A MODEL!
AND PERHAPS--
--WE SHOULD LOOK INTO THIS MATTER FURTHER.
WELL, WHAD-YA KNOW? SOME GOOD MIGHT COME OF THIS TRIP AFTER ALL!
AWRIGHT, BOZZY, WE'LL GO TALK TA SQUIRE BLAKBLUD IN THE MORNIN'.
BUT DON'T GET YER 'OPES UP. THIS WHOLE THING COULD TURN OUT TA BE--
"--A DEAD END!"
MORNING COMES, BRINGING WITH IT CLEARING SKIES--
--AND THE INTOXICATING PROMISE OF ADVENTURE.
ACCORDIN' TA TIMMONS' DIRECTIONS, THAT'S THE PLACE.
SQUIRE BLAKBLUD'S MANOR!

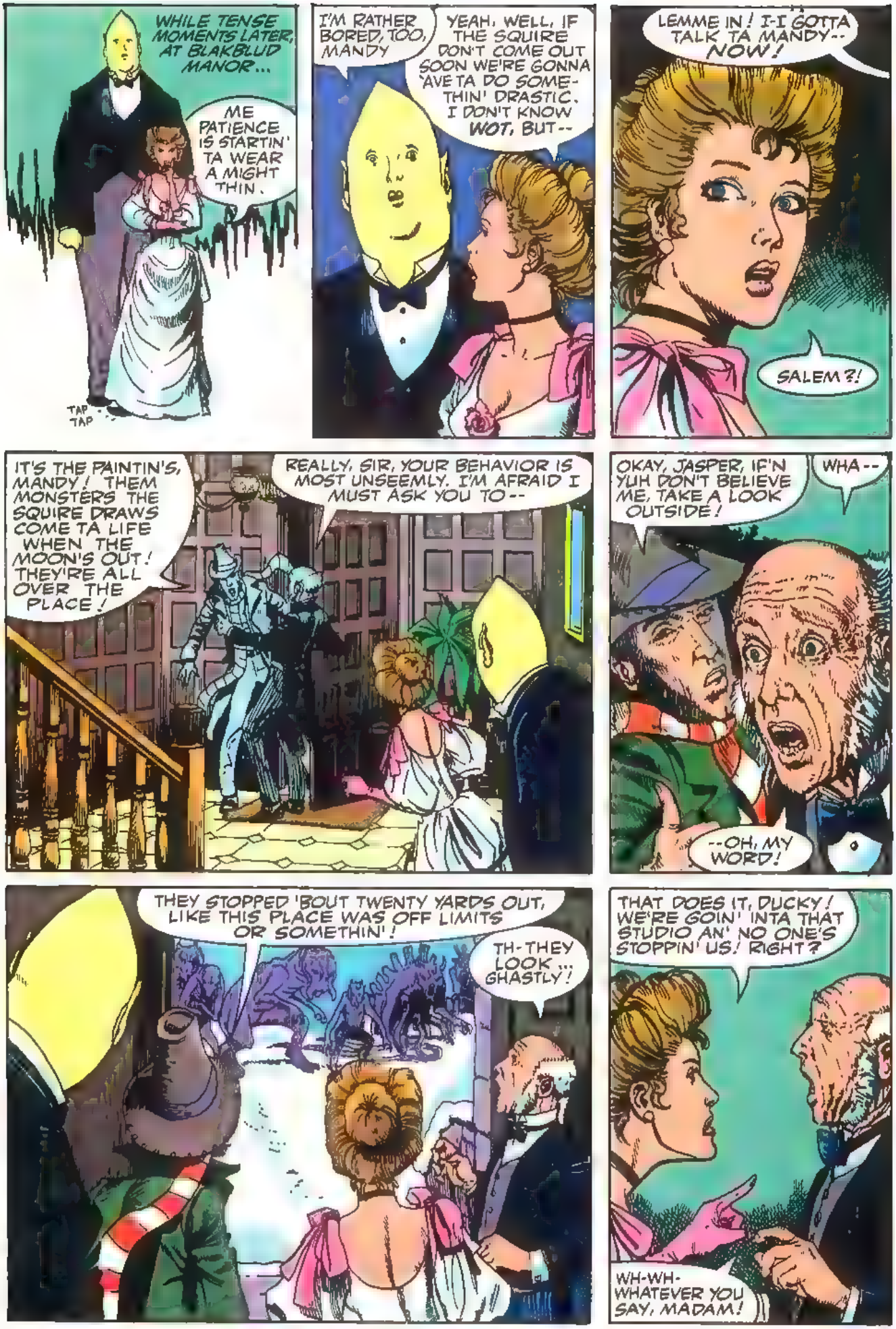

MORNIN', GUV NOR
TELL YER BOSS MISS FLYNN'S 'ERE, WILL YA ? I THINK 'E'LL SEE US.
SORRY TA BARGE IN LIKE THIS, SQUIRE, BUT Y'SEE, I'M A WRITER FER THE LONDON ART VIEW--
--AN' MR. BOSWELL 'ERE IS OUR RESIDENT CRITIC.
I'M DELIGHTED TO SEE YOU, MISS FLYNN YOU SAY YOU WORK FOR ART VIEW ?
YEAH, AN' I'M SORRY--
--FER NOT REALISIN' YA WERE THE SQUIRE BLAK-BLUD YES-TERDAY.
Y'SEE, THE REASON I'M OUT IN THE STICKS IS 'CAUSE I'M DOIN' A PIECE ON THE PAINTERS O' RURAL ENGLAND
AN' I'D LIKE YA TA BE IN ME ARTICLE.
I'M FLATTERED, ROGERS, TAKE SOME HOT TEA TO MISS FLYNN'S DRIVER WHILE I SHOW OUR GUESTS THE GALLERY
VERY GOOD, SIR.
THESE ARE MOSTLY MY EARLY WORKS-- I'VE IMPROVED QUITE A BIT SINCE THEN.
I HOPE YOU'RE NOT DISAP-POINTED
THEY LOOK DELICIOUS, SQUIRE.
WHY, THANK YOU, MR. BOSWELL. NOW OVER HERE--
WHA--? BOZZY! WOT'RE YOU--STOP THAT ! NOW !

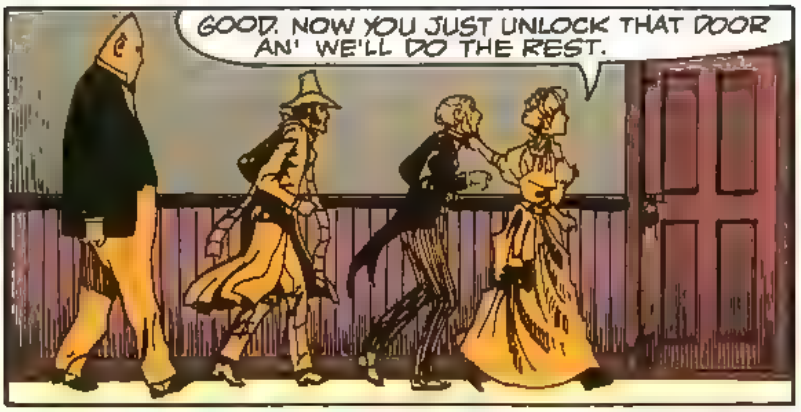
BUT, MANDY, THE PAINTINGS ARE DELICIOUS. THEY HAVE A LEAD BASE THAT IS QUITE TASTY
--GO EAT A VASE OR SOME-THIN'!
SMACK
GOR, BOZZY, IF YER SO BLOOM-IN' 'UNGRY--
BUT, MANDY, YOU KNOW PORCELAIN GIVES ME GAS.
UH, SAY, SQUIRE, WHY THE BIG LOCK ON THIS DOOR?
GOT YER PRIZE PICTURES STORED 'ERE?
ACTUALLY, THAT'S MY STUDIO. NO ONE IS ALLOWED INSIDE.
IT, ER, DISRUPTS THE CREATIVE HUMOURS.
HMMM.
Y'KNOW, SQUIRE, THERE'S SO MUCH TA SEE, I DON'T KNOW 'OW WE CAN COVER IT ALL IN A DAY.
WELL, IF YOU'D LIKE, I'D BE DELIGHTED TO CONTINUE THE TOUR TO-MORROW.
WHY, SQUIRE, 'OW GRACIOUS! ASKIN' US TA STAY OVER-NIGHT! WE ACCEPT!
EH? B-BUT, I WASN'T...I- I MEAN, THAT ISN'T... ER... HOW NICE.
AND SOON...
WE'LL BE STAYIN' THE NIGHT, MR. 'AWKSHAW. YA CAN FETCH US IN THE MORNIN'.
YUH WANT ME TA LEAVE? BUT DON'T YUH THINK I SHOULD HANG AROUND AN'--
WOT LOYALTY, EH? GOOD 'ELP IS 'ARD TA FIND.
BUT I'M SURE MR. 'AWKSHAW 'AS PLENTY O' THINGS TA WATCH AFTER AT THE INN.
"WATCH"? BUT I DON'T--OH!

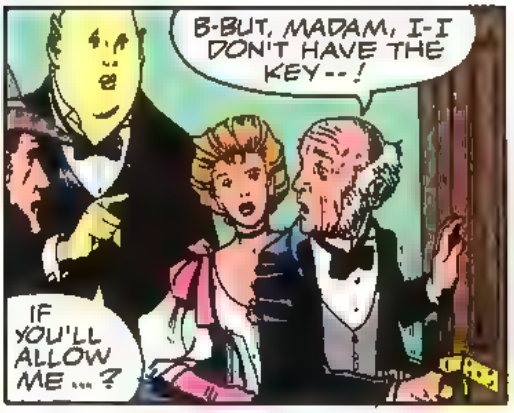
YEAH, THAT INNKEEPER'S DAUGHTER IS ONE SWEET FILLY!
I'LL BE SHORE TA KEEP A REAL SHARP EYE ON HER!
THIS WAY, SIR.
YER A PROPER GENT, SQUIRE, ASKIN' US TA STAY OVER LIKE THIS.
THE PLEASURE IS ?AHEM? MINE ENTIRELY ...
THE DAY GROWS OLD, WITHERS. AND AT LAST, A WEAK SUN SINKS SLOWLY, AS IF RELUCTANTLY, BEYOND NOR-BRIDGE.
BLOOD SHADOWS SPILL ACROSS THE SNOW.
THAT WAS ONE 'ELL OF A FEED, GUV'NOR.
UH, YES, COOK IS A TREASURE.
WOULD YOU CARE FOR A BRANDY, MISS FLYNN? MR. BOSWELL?
NO, THANK YOU, SQUIRE. ALCOHOL TENDS TO MAKE ME VIBRATE.
VIB...? AH. VERY WELL.
BUT YOU MUST EXCUSE ME NOW
I PAINT AT NIGHT-- A SMALL ECCENTRI-CITY OF MINE.
I'LL SEE YOU BOTH AT BREAKFAST.
DRAT! I CAN'T GET INTA THAT STUDIO 'TIL THE BLINKIN' SQUIRE FINISHES WOTEVER 'E'S DOIN' THERE!
THIS COULD BE TRICKIER'N I THOUGHT...!

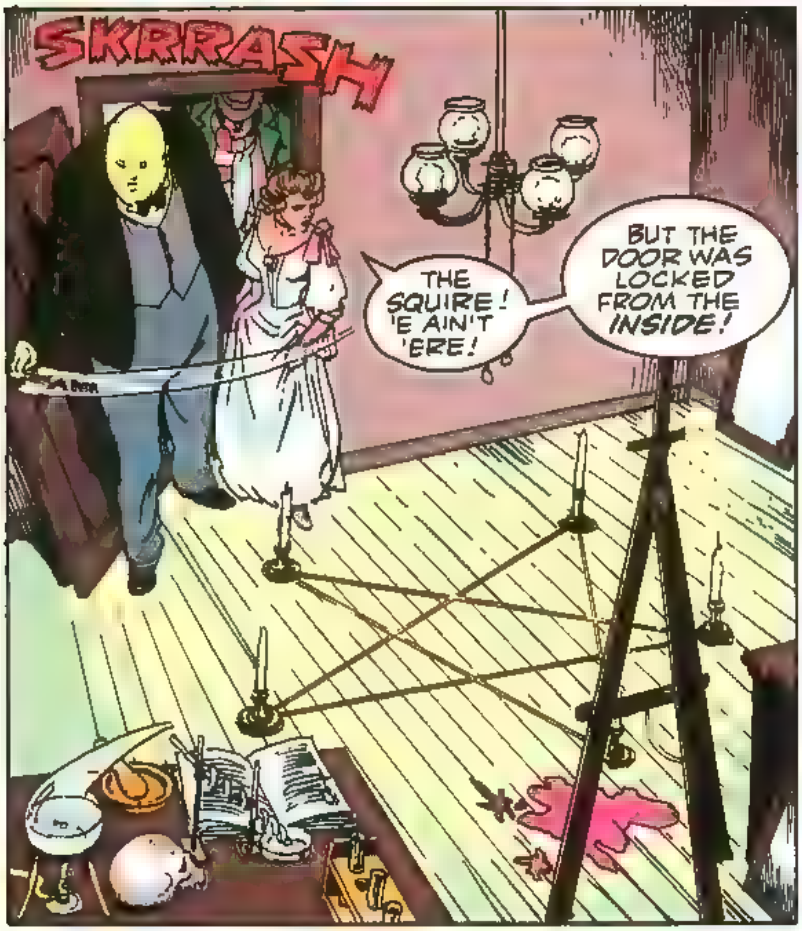
WHILE IN THE VILLAGE, A SHORT WHILE LATER --
--UNDER THE BLIND STARE OF A BLOATED MOON...
SHOOT. I FEEL LIKE A DAD-BURNED BABY-SITTER!
I KNOW MANDY MEANT FER ME TA WATCH THIS SILLY PAINTIN'--
--BUT I'M GETTIN' 'BOUT AS BORED AS BOSWELL ALWAYS SAYS HE IS!
MEBBE I SHOULD SNEAK ME FORTY WINKS BEFORE-- HUH? THEM SHADOWS!
WONDER WHAT MR. TIMMONS IS DOIN' UP THIS--
OH...
...MY...
...LORD!

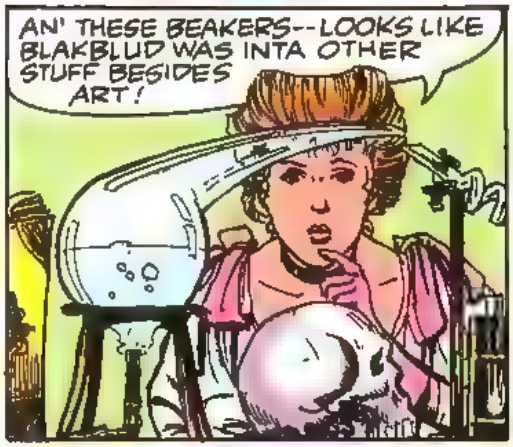
M-MEBBE I AM ASLEEP! A-AN' DREAMIN'! FIRST THEM MONSTERS, A-AN' NOW THIS FURRY CRITTER--
--IS STEPPIN' RIGHT OUTTA THAT PAINTIN'!
THEY ALL MUST BE FROM THE SQUIRE'S PICTURES!
A-AN' MUH SCATTER-GUN--
--AIN'T DOIN' NOTHIN' BUT PUNCHIN' HOLES IN 'EM!
BOOM!
KAREESH
TIME TA SCOOT!
SHORE HOPE THAT CAYUSE I SAW AT THE BLACKSMITH'S STABLE IS STILL THERE!
'CAUSE I CAN'T OUTRUN THESE BOOGYMEN ON FOOT FOR LONG!
MOVE, HOSS! LESS'N YUH WANT US BOTH TA BE BEANS AN' BACON FOR A BUNCH O' OVERGROWED GULLY LIZARDS!
GIDDAP!
WELL, WELL, WELL. THIS IS STARTIN' TA GET INT'RESTIN'...!


WHILE TENSE MOMENTS LATER, AT BLAKBLUD MANOR...
ME PATIENCE IS STARTIN' TA WEAR A MIGHT THIN.
TAP TAP
I'M RATHER BORED, TOO, MANDY
YEAH, WELL, IF THE SQUIRE DON'T COME OUT SOON WE'RE GONNA 'AVE TA DO SOMETHIN' DRASTIC. I DON'T KNOW WOT, BUT--
LEMME IN! I-I GOTTA TALK TA MANDY-- NOW!
SALEM?!
IT'S THE PAINTIN'S, MANDY! THEM MONSTERS THE SQUIRE DRAWS COME TA LIFE WHEN THE MOON'S OUT! THEY'RE ALL OVER THE PLACE!
REALLY, SIR, YOUR BEHAVIOR IS MOST UNSEEMLY. I'M AFRAID I MUST ASK YOU TO--
OKAY, JASPER, IF'N YUH DON'T BELIEVE ME, TAKE A LOOK OUTSIDE!
WHA--
--OH, MY WORD!
THEY STOPPED 'BOUT TWENTY YARDS OUT, LIKE THIS PLACE WAS OFF LIMITS OR SOMETHIN'!
TH-THEY LOOK... GHASTLY!
THAT DOES IT, DUCKY! WE'RE GOIN' INTA THAT STUDIO AN' NO ONE'S STOPPIN' US! RIGHT?
WH-WH-WHATEVER YOU SAY, MADAM!

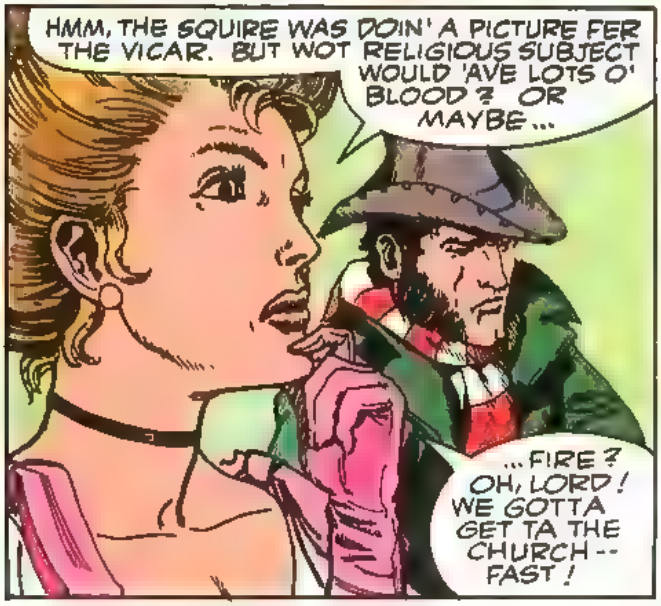

GOOD. NOW YOU JUST UNLOCK THAT DOOR AN' WE'LL DO THE REST.

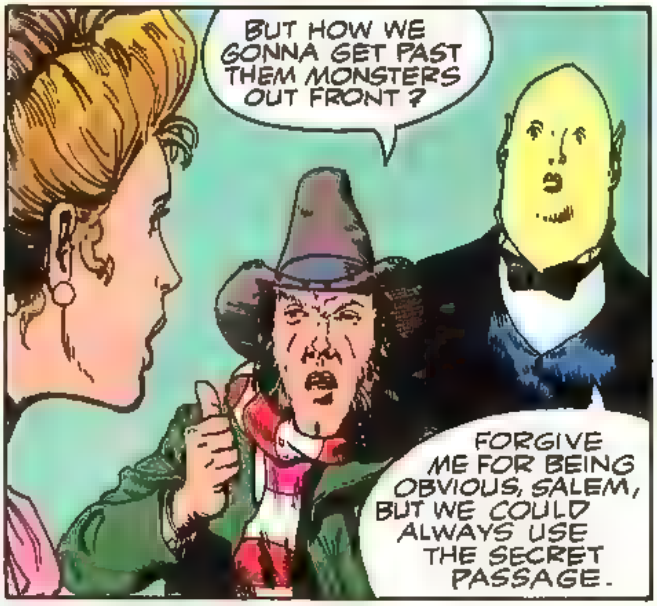

B-BUT, MADAM, I-I DON'T HAVE THE KEY--!
IF YOU'LL ALLOW ME ...?

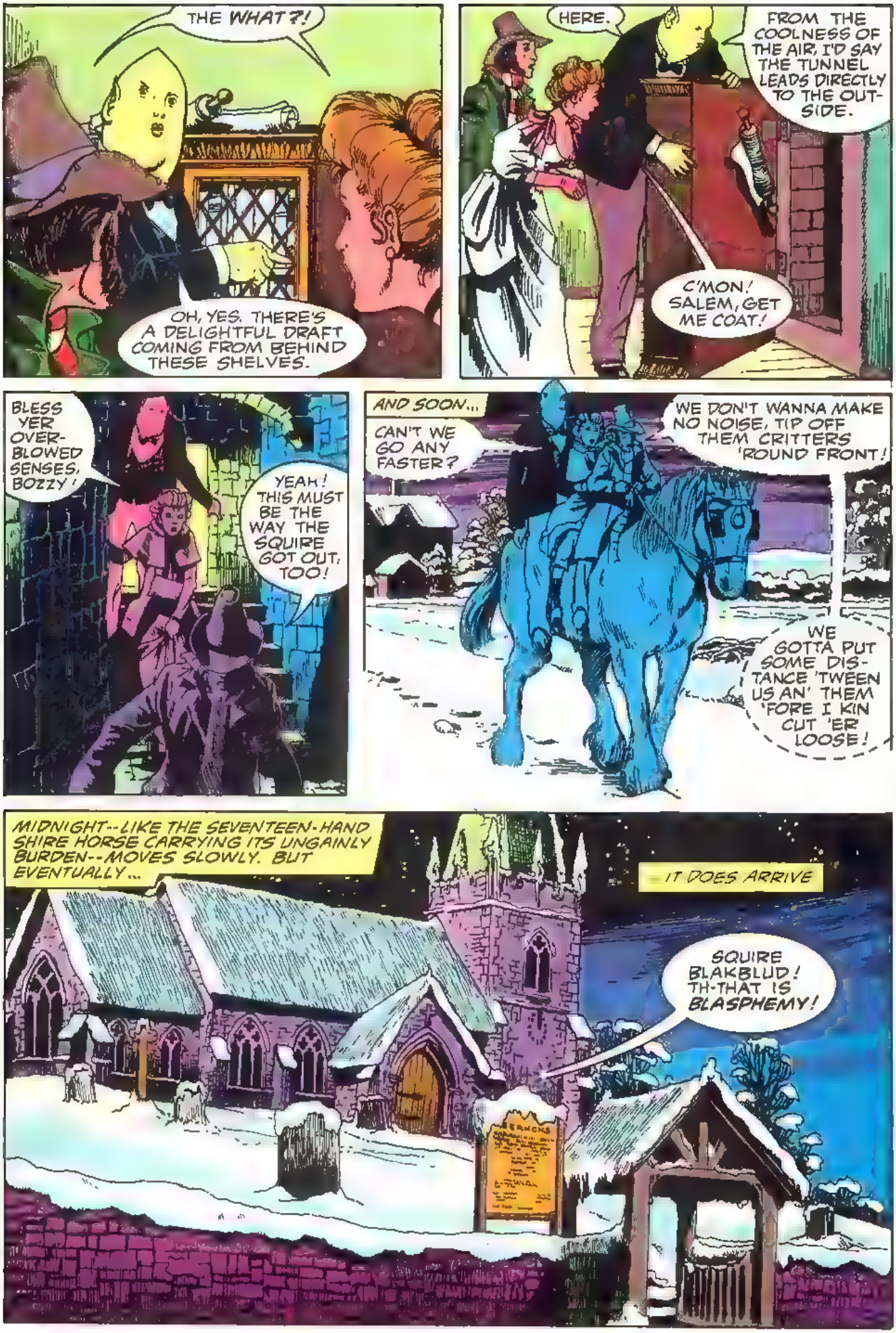

SKRRASH
THE SQUIRE! 'E AIN'T 'ERE!
BUT THE DOOR WAS LOCKED FROM THE INSIDE!

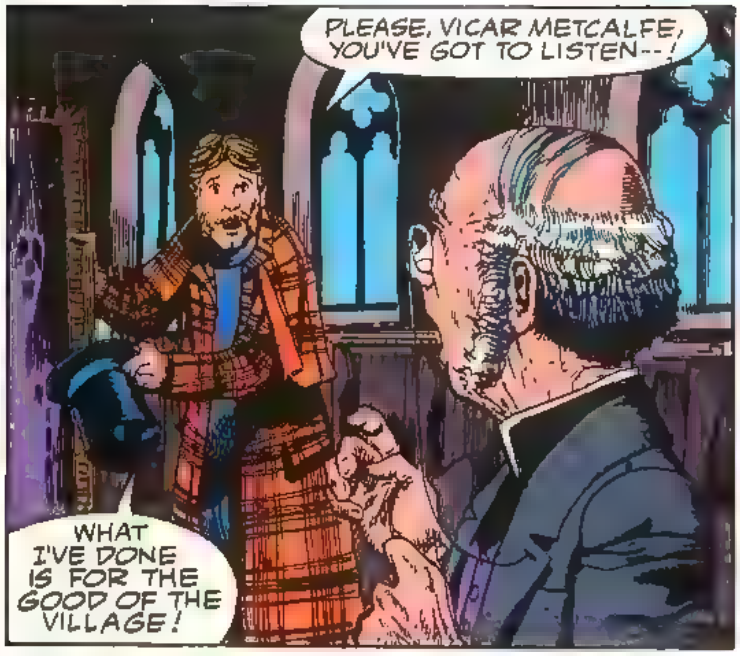

AN' THESE BEAKERS--LOOKS LIKE BLAKBLUD WAS INTA OTHER STUFF BESIDES ART!

SAY, THERE'S FRESH PAINT ALL OVER THE FLOOR! MOSTLY RED!
LIKE... BLOOD?


HMM, THE SQUIRE WAS DOIN' A PICTURE FER THE VICAR. BUT WOT RELIGIOUS SUBJECT WOULD 'AVE LOTS O' BLOOD? OR MAYBE...
...FIRE? OH, LORD! WE GOTTA GET TA THE CHURCH -- FAST!

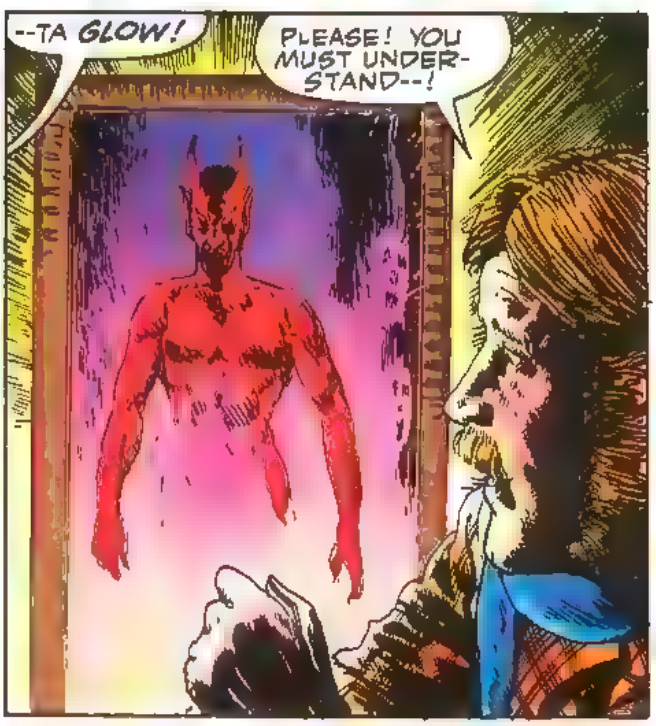

BUT HOW WE GONNA GET PAST THEM MONSTERS OUT FRONT?
FORGIVE ME FOR BEING OBVIOUS, SALEM, BUT WE COULD ALWAYS USE THE SECRET PASSAGE.

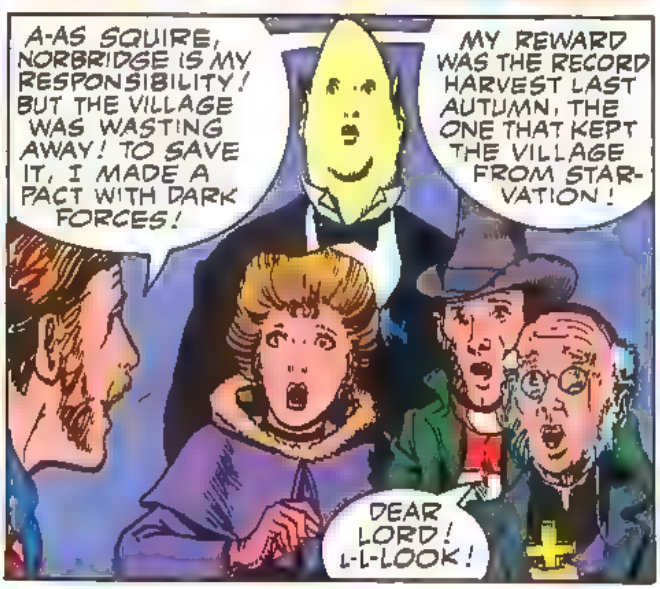

THE WHAT?!
OH, YES. THERE'S A DELIGHTFUL DRAFT COMING FROM BEHIND THESE SHELVES.
HERE.
FROM THE COOLNESS OF THE AIR, I'D SAY THE TUNNEL LEADS DIRECTLY TO THE OUTSIDE.
C'MON! SALEM, GET ME COAT!
BLESS YER OVER-BLOWED SENSES, BOZZY!
YEAH! THIS MUST BE THE WAY THE SQUIRE GOT OUT, TOO!
AND SOON...
CAN'T WE GO ANY FASTER?
WE DON'T WANNA MAKE NO NOISE, TIP OFF THEM CRITTERS 'ROUND FRONT!
WE GOTTA PUT SOME DISTANCE 'TWEEN US AN' THEM 'FORE I KIN CUT 'ER LOOSE!
MIDNIGHT--LIKE THE SEVENTEEN-HAND SHIRE HORSE CARRYING ITS UNGAINLY BURDEN--MOVES SLOWLY. BUT EVENTUALLY...
IT DOES ARRIVE
SQUIRE BLAKBLUD! TH-THAT IS BLASPHEMY!
SERMONS


PLEASE, VICAR METCALFE, YOU'VE GOT TO LISTEN--!
WHAT I'VE DONE IS FOR THE GOOD OF THE VILLAGE!

TELL THAT TA THE BLACKSMITH, SQUIRE! AN' ALL THE OTHERS WHO'VE DIED!
MANDY! TH-THE PAINTIN'!

IT'S THE DEVIL HISSELF!
GOR! A-AN' NOW IT'S STARTIN'--


--TA GLOW!
PLEASE! YOU MUST UNDER-STAND--!


A-AS SQUIRE, NORBRIDGE IS MY RESPONSIBILITY! BUT THE VILLAGE WAS WASTING AWAY! TO SAVE IT, I MADE A PACT WITH DARK FORCES!
MY REWARD WAS THE RECORD HARVEST LAST AUTUMN, THE ONE THAT KEPT THE VILLAGE FROM STAR-VATION!
DEAR LORD! L-L-LOOK!

S-SOMETHING IS FORMING IN THE AIR! A-ALMOST AS IF THE PAINTING WERE... GIVING BIRTH!
TALK, BLAKBLUD! JUST WOT WAS YER END O' THE BARGAIN?
I I WAS TO MIX ALCHEMICAL PAINTS AND DO PORTRAITS OF SATAN'S MINIONS, TO RELEASE THEM INTO THIS REALM IN PREPARATION FOR...
...HIS COMING!
BLESSED JESUS...!
H-HE PROMISED THAT NORBRIDGE WOULD BE SPARED!
THAT ONCE FREE, HE WOULD LEAVE US ALONE!
BUT NOW... I-I'M NOT SO CERTAIN...
LOOK, SQUIRE! SEE WOT YER SETTIN' FREE! JUST FEEL THE EVIL! THE 'ORROR! THE PAIN!
'OW CAN ANYONE-- ANYTHING-- BE WORTH LETTIN' THAT LOOSE ON THE WORLD?
I DON T KNOW! I-I M SO CONFUSED...!
WELL, I AIN'T! 'OW DO WE STOP .T?
ONCE T S FULLY FORMED YOU CAN'T!
B-BUT BEFORE THEN...
...PERHAPS, F THE PORTRA.T WERE DESTROYED.. BY F RE...
AW- RIGHT, THEN! WE AIN T GOT MUCH TIME!
WE-- OH NO!

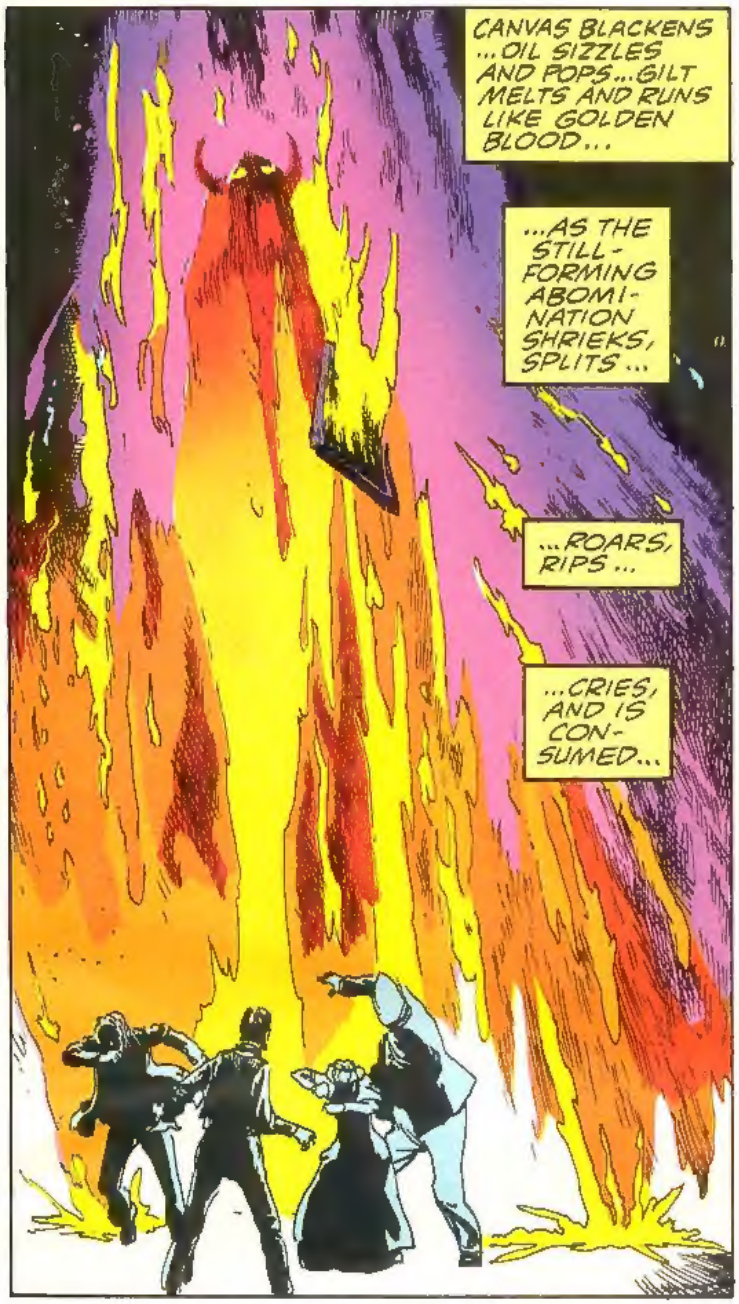
THE PICTURE'S GONE!
I BELIEVE THAT DOOR WAS CLOSED WHEN WE ENTERED, MANDY. PERHAPS--
RIGHT! LET'S GO.
THERE HE IS!
BUT WHAT KINDA SCALA-WAG'D STEAL A PAINTIN' FROM A CHURCH?
'E'S 'EADIN' FER THE SKATIN' POND!
HE'S GOT A BIG LEAD, BUT I THINK I KIN--
--HUH? H-HE'S THROWIN' THE PAINTIN' INTA THE POND!
GRAB 'IM!
CHISH

THORPE?! YOU?!
I BEEN KEEPIN' A EYE ON YA, MANDY-GIRL. I FOLLOWED YER YANK PAL TA THE MANOR--
--AN' TA THE CHURCH. I HEARD WOT WAS SAID.
WHEN THE SQUIRE STARTED GOIN' SOFT, I SAW ME CHANCE--I TOOK THE PAINTIN'!
I FIGGERED OL' NICK'D REWARD ME WITH A FORTUNE IF I SAVED HIS LITTLE "DOORWAY"!
AN' NOW I'M ON ME WAY TA THE GOOD LIFE!
'CAUSE YA'LL NEVER FIND THE PICTURE UNDER ALL THAT ICE!
LEASTWAYS NOT BEFORE--
--HE GETS HERE!
LORDY! TH-THAT THING'S GOT HUGE!
AN' IT'S COMIN' THIS WAY!
FORGIVE ME FOR CONTRADICTING YOU, MR. THORPE, BUT I BELIEVE THERE IS SOMETHING WE CAN DO.
EH?

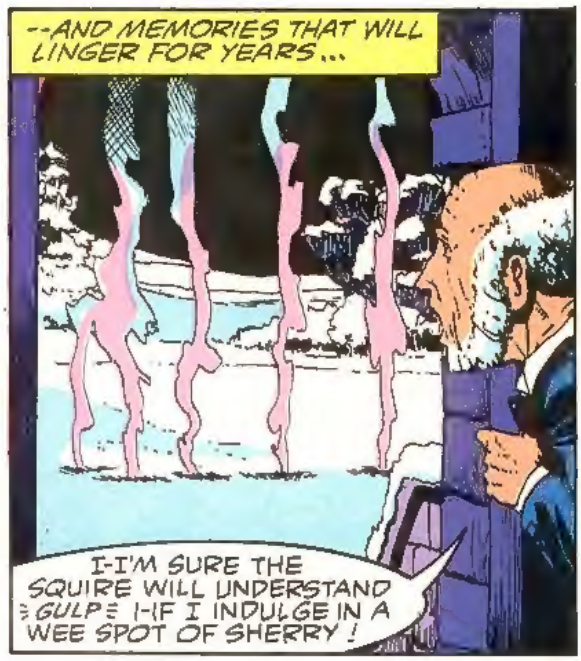
BOZZY'S GIVIN' OFF 'EAT! MELTIN' THE ICE!
THIS PROCEDURE IS GENERALLY RESERVED FOR LOVEMAKING AMONG MY PEOPLE. HOWEVER...
IT WORKED! I CAN SEE THE PAINTIN' THROUGH THE CLEAR WATER! SALEM--!
LEAVE IT TA ME, MANDY!
GEEEERONIMO!
WATER'S KINDA SHALLOW HERE BUT I GOT IT!
THERE'S SOME MATCHES IN MUH COAT! SHOULD BE DRY!
THEY ARE -- BUT THE BLASTED PAINTIN' IS SOAKED! IT WON'T CATCH!
TOO BAD, MANDY-GIRL. LOOKS LIKE YA LOSE...

MAYBE NOT, THORPE! A MATCH MIGHT NOT DO THE TRICK, BUT I BET THIS THING'LL BURN REAL GOOD--

--IN THERE!


CANVAS BLACKENS ...OIL SIZZLES AND POPS...GILT MELTS AND RUNS LIKE GOLDEN BLOOD...
...AS THE STILL-FORMING ABOMI-NATION SHRIEKS, SPLITS...
...ROARS, RIPS...
...CRIES, AND IS CON-SUMED...

...UNTIL ALL THAT REMAINS IS SMOKE, A GREASY PATCH OF FOUL-SMELLING ASH--


--AND MEMORIES THAT WILL LINGER FOR YEARS...
I-I'M SURE THE SQUIRE WILL UNDERSTAND GULP! I-IF I INDULGE IN A WEE SPOT OF SHERRY!

GOOD WORK, MANDY-GIRL!
YA GOT SPICE, JUST LIKE YER OL' MAN!
AN' SAY, NOW THAT YER ON SUCH CHUMMY TERMS WITH THE SQUIRE, MAYBE YA CAN PUT IN A GOOD WORD FER ME, EH?
WOT?
SURE! WITH A LITTLE INVESTMENT, ME PUB COULD BE A THRIVIN' BUSINESS! WE COULD PLAY UP THIS DEVIL STUFF FER THE HOLIDAY TRADE!
RENAME ME PLACE "SATAN'S REST" OR SOMETHIN'! WOTYA THINK, MANDY-GIRL? EH?
I THINK, POP, THAT IF NOTHIN' ELSE 'AS COME O' THIS TRIP, I 'AVE LEARNT ONE THING:
THAT I'M NOT THE ONLY BASTARD IN THIS FAMILY!
I'M SORRY YOUR RELATIVE TURNED OUT TO BE SO UNPLEASANT, MANDY. I KNOW HOW MUCH HAVING A FAMILY MEANS TO YOU.
BOZZY, OL' SOD... SALEM, ME LAD... IF THE TRUTH BE TOLD--
--I'VE GOT ME THE BEST FAMILY A GIRL EVER 'AD.

NEXT ISSUE: "THE COBBLESTONE JUNGLE!"

LONDON TIMES

Dear Bozzers,

The Bozz Chronicles is easily one of the best new comics to hit the stands in some time. I plan to come back for many more issues. One of the things that *amazes* me about the book is how the characters work despite some seeming problems. Salem looks too much like Wolverine in street clothes, but when he takes off his hat that problem's solved. And his personality is different enough to avoid troubles that way. Bozz's appearance is so alien that it's hard to believe he wouldn't draw a bigger reaction from people in Victorian England. On the other hand, his looks are so intriguing and appealing that this is easy to overlook. (By the way, what does he do with his tail when he wears clothes?)

Mandy presents the most intriguing problem. She is essentially built on two stereotypes: the Hooker-With-A-Heart-Of-Gold, and the Hooker-Whose-Looks-Could-Stop-A-Clock. (In Mandy's case, they could stop Big Ben!) Yet Mandy transcends the stereotypes beautifully to become a fascinating character. Indeed, she's the central character, more so than Bozz. And that works well; Bozz's strangeness and aloof manner cry out for a character like Mandy to draw the reader in, and her resourcefulness makes her a dandy central figure.

And speaking of figures, my one real problem was the two panel nude sequence of Mandy in **Issue #1**. Now, understand that I don't have a problem with nudity in comics. It can work well when it fits the story appropriately. (Such a case is Bozz's nudity; too bad he doesn't have Mandy's build!) However, the nudity here was gratuitous and not needed. I don't mind getting a look at Mandy's prodigious bazongas, but next time make it for legitimate reasons, okay?

I also must take issue with **Archie's** opening editorial. **Archie** calls the work "sexy." Now, forgive me, but drawing a phenomenally built woman in low-cut outfits and evocative poses does not constitute "sexy" stuff. Sexiness is a quality of personality, not of breast development. This comic is endearing and beautiful, but it is not sexy. It could become sexy down the line, but it isn't sexy now.

In case you've forgotten that I like the book, let me say that I find the characterizations delightful. Every character is an individual, even down to nameless people on the street. This is no mean feat. And the art is some of the best I've seen this year.

The Bozz Chronicles is a book you can be proud of. Keep up the good work.

Robert Bruce Braley
Napoleon, OH

*Thanks for the compliments, **Robert**, and for the criticisms. Your observations are interesting and appreciated. However, yours is the only accusation of "gratuitous" that has been directed at the two panels of nudity in **Bozz #1**. Since Mandy was once a lady of the street, it seemed perfectly in character to us for her to sleep in the nude. No offense was intended, and we're sorry if any was taken. But be warned: she's still going to sleep **sans nightie** in warm weather in the future. As for whether the lady is sexy or not, you do have a point: prodigious bazongas do not a sexy woman make. Still, it is the expressed opinion of folks involved with the book—an opinion shared by the vast majority of readers who have commented, I might add—that Mandy Flynn, even draped in a shapeless horse blanket at midnight on a moonless eve, would still be one sexy woman. Her attitude, manner and sensuality reach far beyond the Bazonga Barrier. We hope you'll come to agree.*

Dear Bozzy Boys,

Bozz Chronicles #2 was even better than **Issue #1**. The art was absolutely stunning, especially those demons. The cover alone was a remarkable piece of work. What you've done here is equal to the current **Swamp Thing** run at its most outrageous. Here's hoping that **Bozz** continues past six issues.

Kiril Kundurazieff
Pomona, CA

Dear Archie,

It is too bad that Sherlock Holmes did not have Mandy Flynn as an assistant/partner. If he did, he would not have become addicted to cocaine. He would have found other distractions.

Steven Rae Thomas
Kansas City, MO

*And that does it for another issue. But before we close I'd like to extend a hearty "Thanks!" to John Ridgway for the bang-up job he did drawing our Bozz tale (and tail?) this time around. **Bret Blevins** will be back next issue, for a story that will feature some major developments between certain members of our cast. We hope you'll be here, too.*

—David Michelinie